

ONE

THE DAY IT ALL STARTED—A HOT, August Saturday—I'd gotten off work a little after twelve. My name is Tom Wallace; I work in Publications at the North American Aircraft plant in Inglewood, California. We were living in Hawthorne, renting a two-bedroom tract house owned by one of our next-door neighbors, Mildred Sentas. Another neighbor, Frank Wanamaker, and I usually drove to and from the plant together, alternating cars. But Frank didn't like Saturday work and had managed to beg off that particular day. So I drove home alone.

As I turned onto Tulley Street, I saw the '51 Mercury coupe parked in front of our house and knew that Anne's brother, Philip, was visiting. He was a psychology major at the University of California in Berkeley and he sometimes drove down to L.A. for weekends. This was the first time he'd been to our new place; we'd only moved in two months before.

I nosed the Ford into the driveway and braked it in front of the garage. Across the street Frank Wanamaker's wife, Elizabeth, was sitting on their lawn pulling up weeds. She smiled faintly at me and raised one white-gloved hand. I waved to her as I got out of the car and started for the porch. As I went up its two steps I saw Elizabeth struggle to her feet and adjust her maternity smock. The baby was due in about three months. It was the Wanamaker's first in seven years of marriage.

When I opened the front door and went into the living room, I saw Phil sitting at the kitchen table, a bottle of Coca Cola in front of him. He was about twenty, tall and lean, his darkish-brown hair crew-cut. He glanced in at me and grinned.

"Hi, brother man," he said.

"Hi." I took off my suit coat and hung it in the front closet. Anne met me in the kitchen doorway with a smile and a kiss.

"How's the little mother?" I asked, patting her stomach.

"Gross," she said.

I chuckled and kissed her again.

"As they say," I said, "hot enough for you?"

"Don't even talk about it," she answered.

"Okay."

"Hungry?" she asked.

"Ravenous."

"Good. Phil and I were just about to start."

"Be right with you." I washed my hands and sat down across from Phil, eyeing his blindingly green polo shirt.

"What's that for," I asked, "warning off aircraft?"

"Glow in the dark," he said.

"Helps the co-eds keep track of you at night," I said. Phil grinned.

“Now don’t you two get started again,” Anne said, putting a dish of cold cuts on the table.

“Whatever does you mean?” Phil said to her.

“Never mind now,” she said. “I don’t want any needling session this weekend. It’s too hot.”

“Agreed,” said Phil, “needling excluded. Agreed, brother man?”

“And spoil my weekend?” I said.

“Never mind,” said Anne. “I can’t face that and the heat both.”

“Where’s Richard?” I asked.

“Playing in the back yard with Candy.” Anne sat down beside me with a groan. “There’s a load off my feet,” she said.

I patted her hand and we started eating.

“Speaking of Candy,” Anne said, “I trust you haven’t forgotten the party tonight at Elsie’s.”

“Oh my God,” I said, “I did forget. Do we have to go?”

Anne shrugged. “She invited us a week ago. That was excuse time. It’s too late now.”

“Confusion.” I bit into my ham on rye.

“Brother man seems less than joyous,” Phil said. “Elsie’s shindigs no goo?”

“No goo,” I said.

“Who is she?”

“Our next-door neighbor,” Anne told him. “Candy’s her little girl.”

“And parties are her profession,” I said. “She’s the poor man’s Elsa Maxwell.”

Anne smiled and shook her head. “Poor Elsie,” she said. “If she only knew what awful things we say behind her back.”

“Dull, huh?” said Phil.

“Why talk?” I said. “Go to the party with us and see for yourself.”

“I’ll liven ’er up,” said Phil.

* * *

A little after eight-fifteen Richard fell asleep in his crib and we went next door to Elsie's house. In most marriages you think of a couple's home as *theirs*. Not so with that house. Ron may have made the payments on it but the ownership was strictly Elsie's. You felt it.

It was Ron who answered our knock. He was twenty-four, a couple of years older than Elsie, a couple of inches taller. He was slightly built, sandy-haired with a round, boyish face that seldom lost its impassive set; even when he smiled as he did then, the ends of his mouth curling up slightly.

"Come in," he said in his quiet, polite voice.

Frank and Elizabeth were already there, Elizabeth settled on the red sofa like a diffident patient in a dentist's waiting room, Frank's thin body slouched in one of the red arm chairs. He brightened only a little when we came in, raising his bored gaze from the green rug, straightening up in the chair, then standing. I introduced Phil around.

"Hi!"

I glanced over and saw Elsie peering around the corner of the kitchen doorway. She'd cut her dark hair still shorter and bobbed it still tighter, I noticed. When we'd moved into the neighborhood, she'd had long, drabby blond hair.

We all said hello to her and she disappeared a moment, then came into the room with a tray of drinks in her hands. She was wearing a red, netlike dress which clung tightly to the curves of her plump body. When she bent over to put the tray down on the blondwood coffee table, the bosom of the dress slipped away from her tight, black brassière. I noticed Frank's pointed stare, then Elsie straightened up with a brassy, hostesslike smile and looked at Phil. Anne introduced them.

“Hel-lo,” Elsie said. “I’m so glad you could come.” She looked at us. “Well,” she said, “name your poison.”

What happened that evening up to the point when it all began is not important. There were the usual peregrinations to the kitchen and the bathroom; the usual breaking up and re-gathering of small groups—the women, the men, Frank, Phil and myself, Elizabeth and Anne, Elsie and Phil, Ron and me—and so on; the drifting knots of conversation that take place at any get-together.

There was record music and a little sporadic attempt at dancing. There was Candy stumbling into the living room, blinking and numb with only half-broken sleep; being tucked back into her bed. There were the expected personality displays—Frank, cynical and bored; Elizabeth, quietly radiant in her pregnancy; Phil, amusing and quick; Ron, mute and affable; Anne, soft-spoken and casual; Elsie, bouncing and strainedly vivacious.

One bit of conversation I remember: I was just about to go next door to check on Richard when Elsie said something about our getting a baby-sitter.

“It doesn’t matter when you just go next door like this,” she said, “but you do have to get out once in a while.” Once in a while, to Elsie, meant an average of four nights a week.

“We’d like to,” Anne said, “but we just haven’t been able to find one.”

“Try ours,” said Elsie. “She’s a nice kid and real reliable.”

That was when I left and checked on Richard—and had one of my many nighttime adorations; that standing in semi-darkness over your child’s crib and staring down at him. Nothing else. Just standing there and staring down at his little sleep-flushed face and feeling that almost overwhelming rush of absolute love

in yourself. Sensing something close to holy in the same little being that nearly drove you out of your mind that very afternoon.

I turned up the heat a little then and went back to Elsie's house.

They were talking about hypnotism. I say *they* but, outside of Phil, Anne and maybe Frank, no one there knew the least thing about it. Primarily, it was a dissertation by Phil on one of his favorite topics.

"Oh, I don't believe that," Elsie said as I sat down beside Anne and whispered that Richard was fine. "People who say they were hypnotized weren't, really."

"Of course they were," Phil said. "If they weren't, how could they have hatpins jabbed into their throats without bleeding? Without even crying out?"

Elsie turned her head halfway to the side and looked at Phil in that overdone, accusingly dubious way that people affect when they have to bolster their own uncertain doubts.

"Did you ever *really* see anyone get a hatpin jabbed in their throat?" she said.

"I've had a five-inch hatpin in *my* throat," Phil answered. "And, once, I put one halfway through a friend of mine's arm at school—after I'd hypnotized him."

Elsie shuddered histrionically. "*Uhh,*" she said, "how *awful.*"

"Not at all," Phil said with that casual tone undergraduates love to affect when they are flicking off intellectual bomb-shells. "I didn't feel a thing and neither did my friend."

"Oh, you're just making that up," Elsie said, studiously disbelieving.

"Not at all," said Phil.

It was Frank who gave it the final, toppling push.

“All right,” he said, “let’s see you hypnotize somebody then.” He squeezed out one of his faintly cruel smiles. “Hypnotize Elsie,” he said.

“Oh, no you don’t!” Elsie squealed. “I’m not going to do terrible things in front of everybody.”

“I thought you didn’t believe in it,” Phil said, amusedly.

“I don’t, I don’t,” she insisted. “But . . . well, not *me*.”

Frank’s dark eyes moved. “All right,” he said, “who’s going to be hypnotized?”

“I wouldn’t suggest me unless we want to spend the whole night here,” Anne said. “Phil used to waste hours trying to hypnotize me.”

“You’re a lousy subject, that’s all,” Phil said, grinning at her.

“Okay, who’s it gonna be then?” Frank persisted. “How about you, Lizzie?”

“Oh . . .” Elizabeth lowered her eyes and smiled embarrassedly.

“We promise not to make you take your clothes off,” Frank said.

“*Frank.*” Elizabeth was thirty-one but she still blushed like a little girl. She wouldn’t look at anybody. Elsie giggled. Frank looked only vaguely pleased. Elizabeth was too easy a mark for him.

“Come on, Elsie,” he said, “be a sport. Let him put you under. We won’t make you do a strip tease on the kitchen table.”

“You—” Ron started to say.

“Oh, you’re awful!” Elsie said, delighted.

“What were you going to say, Ron?” I asked.

Ron swallowed. “I—I was going to ask Phil,” he said, “you—can’t make someone—do what they don’t want to do, can you? I mean—what they *wouldn’t* do? If they were awake, I mean.”

“Oh, what do *you* know about hypnotism, Ronny?”

Elsie asked, trying to sound pleasantly amused. The acidity still came through.

“Well, it’s true and it isn’t true,” Phil said. “You can’t make a subject break his own moral code. *But*—you can make almost any act fit into his moral code.”

“How do you mean?” Frank asked. “This sounds promising.”

“Well, for instance,” Phil said, “if I hypnotized your wife—”

“You could make her do something *wicked*?” Frank asked, looking at Elizabeth pointedly.

“Frank, please,” she almost whispered.

“Say I put a loaded gun in her hand,” Phil said, “and told her to shoot you. She wouldn’t do it.”

“That’s what you think,” Frank said, snickering. I looked at Elizabeth again and saw her swallowing dryly. She was one of those pale and pitiable creatures who seem constantly vulnerable to hurt. You want to protect them and yet you can’t. Of course Frank wasn’t the easiest man in the world to live with either.

“Well, for argument’s sake,” Phil said, smiling a little, “we’ll assume she wouldn’t shoot you.”

“Okay, for argument’s sake,” Frank said. He glanced at Elizabeth, a hint of that cruel smile on his lips again.

“*But*,” Phil said, “if I were to tell Elizabeth that you were going to strangle her and told her that the only defense in the world she had was to shoot you right away—well, she might very well shoot you.”

“How true,” said Frank.

“Oh, I don’t believe that,” said Elsie.

“That’s right,” I joined in. “We have a friend named Alan Porter—he’s a psychiatrist—and he gave a demonstration of that very thing. He had a young mother under hypnosis and he told her he was going to kill her baby and the only way she could stop him was by stabbing him with the knife she was holding—

it was a piece of cardboard. She stabbed him all right.”

“Well, that’s different,” said Elsie. “Anyway, she was probably just playing along with a gag.”

“Look,” said Phil, gesturing dramatically with his hands, “I’ll prove it to you right now if you want. Just let me hypnotize you.”

“No, *sir*,” said Elsie, “not me.”

“How about you?” Phil asked Ron.

Ron mumbled something and shook his head with a faint smile. “He’s already half hypnotized,” said Elsie, kindly.

“Can’t I get me a customer?” asked Phil. He sounded disappointed.

“How about you, Frank?” I asked.

“Uh-uh,” he said, smiling as he blew out cigarette smoke. “Don’t want ol’ Lizzie knowing what’s in my dirty old subconscious.”

Elsie giggled and Elizabeth pressed her lips together, having failed in the attempt to smile.

“Well, that leaves you, brother man,” said Phil, looking at me.

“You don’t really think you could hypnotize *me*, do you?” I needed.

“Don’t be so darn sure,” he said, wagging a finger at me. “You arrogant ones are the first to topple.”

I grinned, shrugging. “So what have I got to lose?” I said.

TWO

FIRST OF ALL, PHIL ASKED THAT ALL THE lights be put out except for one dim wall lamp over the fireplace. Then he had me stretch out on the sofa while Ron went into the kitchen to get extra chairs. Gradually, everyone settled down. When the rustlings, comments and coughs had finally ceased, Phil spoke.

“Now I can’t promise anything,” he said.

“You mean we’re going through all this for nothing?” Elsie asked.

“Some people are harder to hypnotize than others, that’s all,” Phil said. “I don’t know about Tom. But you, for instance, Elsie, would be a good subject, I’m sure.”

“Flattery will get you nowhere,” Elsie said. “You just hypnotize your brother-in-law.”

Phil turned back to me.

“All right, brother man, you ready?” he asked.

“Yes, sir, Mr. Cagliostro.”

Phil pointed at me. “You just watch out,” he said, “I have a feeling you’re going to be a good subject.”

“That’s me,” I said.

“Okay.” Phil shifted in his chair. “Now everybody get quiet, please. Any distraction will break it up until the actual hypnosis takes place.” He leaned forward and held out his forefinger again.

“Look at it,” he said to me.

“Fine looking finger,” I said. Frank snickered.

“Quiet, please,” Phil said. He held the finger about six inches from my eyes. “Look at it,” he said. “Keep looking at it. Don’t look at anything else, just my finger.”

“Why, what’s it gonna do?” I asked.

“Poke you right in the eye if you don’t *fermez* your big fat *bouche*.” Phil jabbed the finger at me and I shut my eyes instinctively.

“All right,” Phil said, “open ’em up. Let’s try again.”

“Yes, *sir*,” I said.

“Now look at the finger. Just the finger. Don’t look at anything else. Keep looking at the finger, the finger. I don’t want you to look at anything but the finger.”

“Your nail is dirty,” I said.

Everybody laughed. Phil sank back in his chair with a grimace and pressed his thumb and forefinger to his eyes.

“Like I said,” he said, “a lousy subject.”

He looked over at Elsie.

“How about it?” he said. “I’m sure I could hypnotize you.”

“Uh-uh.” Elsie shook her close-cropped head vigorously.

“Let him try, Elsie,” Ron said.

“*No-o.*” Elsie glared at him as if he’d suggested something vile.

“Come on, champ,” I said to Phil, “let’s put me under now.”

“You gonna play it straight,” he asked, “or you gonna play it for the gallery?”

“I’ll be good, sir, Mr. Mesmer, sir.”

“You will like . . .” Phil leaned forward again, then settled back. “Well, let’s forget the finger,” he said. “Close your eyes.”

“Close my eyes,” I said. I did.

“Dark, isn’t it?” said Frank.

I opened my eyes. “Not now,” I said.

“Will you close your eyes, you clunk,” Phil said. I did. I took a deep breath and settled back on the pillow. I could hear the slight breathings and chair-creakings of the others.

“All right,” said Phil, “I want you to listen to me now.”

I pretended to snore. I heard Elsie’s explosive giggle; then I opened my eyes and looked at Phil’s disgusted face.

“All right, all right,” I promised, “I’ll be good.” I closed my eyes. “Go ahead,” I said, “I’ll be good.”

“Honest *Indian*?” Phil enunciated.

“That’s pretty strong language to use in the company of these fine women,” I said. “However, honest, as you say, Indian.”

“All right. Shut your eyes then, you bum.”

“Now that’s a poor way to win my confidence,” I said. “How am I supposed to venerate you when you talk to me like that? Alan Porter doesn’t—”

“Will you shut your fat eyes?” Phil interrupted.

“Shut. Shut,” I said. “You may fire when griddy, Redley.”

Phil took a deep and weary breath. “Oh, well,” he said. Then he started talking again.

“I want you to pretend you’re in a theatre,” he

said. “An enormous theatre. You’re sitting near the front. It’s completely black inside.”

Across the room I heard Elizabeth’s slight, apologetic throat-clearing.

“There’s no light in the theatre,” Phil went on. “It’s completely dark—like black velvet. The walls are covered with black velvet. The seats are all made of black velvet.”

“Expensive,” I said.

They all laughed. “Oh . . . *shoot*,” Phil said. I opened my eyes and grinned at him.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” I said.

“Oh . . . the heck you are.”

“Yes, I am. I am.” I closed my eyes tight. “See? See? I’m back in the theatre again. I’m in the loges. What’s playing?”

“You are a son of a b,” said Phil.

“Sir,” I said, “control. Go ahead. If I don’t stay quiet, I give you permission to hit me on the head.”

“Don’t think I won’t,” Phil said. “Someone hand me that lamp.” He was quiet a moment. Then he said, “You really want to go on with it?”

“Brother *man*,” I said.

“*You . . .*” Phil cleared his throat. “All right,” he said, patiently.

I won’t go into the complete progression; it took too long. It’s hard to get serious when you’re in a group like that. Especially when Phil and I were so used to heckling each other. I’m afraid I broke up many a moment when he thought he had me. After a while Elsie got bored and went in the kitchen to get food ready. Frank began to talk softly with Anne and direct an occasional, acidulous comment our way. A good hour must have passed and we were still nowhere. I don’t know why Phil kept on. He must have felt I was a challenge. At any rate, he wouldn’t give up. He kept on with that theatre bit and, after a while,

Frank stopped talking and watched and, except for a slight clinking of dishes in the kitchen, there was only the monotonous sound of Phil's voice, talking at me.

"The walls are dark velvet, the floors are covered with dark velvet rugs. It's black inside, absolutely black. Except for one thing. In the whole pitch-black theatre there's only one thing you can see. The letters up on the screen. Tall, thin, white letters on the black, black screen. They spell *sleep*. Sleep. You're very comfortable, very comfortable. You're just sitting there and looking at the screen, looking, looking at that single word up there. Sleep. Sleep. Sleep."

I'll never know what made it begin to work on me unless it was sheer repetition. I suspect my assurance that I couldn't be hypnotized helped too; an assurance of such illogical magnitude that I took it for granted. I didn't even *try* to get hypnotized. To quote Elsie—I just played along with the gag.

"You're relaxing," Phil said. "Your feet and ankles are relaxed. Your legs are relaxed, so relaxed. Your hands are limp and heavy. Your arms are relaxed, so relaxed. You're beginning to relax all over. Relax. Relax. You're going to sleep. To sleep. You're going to sleep."

And I was. I started slipping away. By the time I felt the slightest trickle of awareness as to what was happening to me, it was too late. It was as if my mind—or, rather, my volition—were a moth being set into congealing wax. There was a faint fluttering as I tried to escape; but all in vain. I began to feel as I had once when I had an impacted wisdom tooth taken out. The oral surgeon had jabbed a needle into the exposed vein on my left arm. I'd asked him what it was for and he'd said it was to stop excess salivation. I guess that's what they always say so the patient won't be afraid. Because it wasn't for that, it was a fast-acting general anesthetic. The room started weaving

around me, everything got watery in front of me, the nurses leaning over me wavered as if I were looking at them through lenses of jelly. And then I woke up; it was that fast. I didn't even realize when I'd lost consciousness. It seemed as if I'd closed my eyes only a second or two. I'd been out cold for forty-five minutes.

It was just like that again. I opened my eyes and saw Phil sitting there grinning at me. I blinked at him.

"What'd I do, doze off?" I asked.

Phil chuckled. I looked around. They were all looking at me in different ways; Frank, curious; Ron, baffled; Elizabeth blank; Elsie half afraid. Anne looked concerned.

"Are you all right, honey?" she asked me.

"Sure. Why?" I looked at her a moment. Then I sat up. "You don't mean to tell me it took?" I said, incredulously.

"Did it ever," she said, her smile only half amused.

"I was hypnotized?"

That seemed to break the tension. Everybody seemed to talk at once.

"I'll be damned," said Frank.

"My goodness," said Elizabeth. Ron shook his head wonderingly.

"Were you really *hypnotized*?" Elsie asked. There was very little distrust left in her voice.

"I . . . guess I was," I said.

"You know it," Phil said, unable to stop grinning.

I looked at Anne again. "I really was?" I asked.

"If you weren't, you're the best little actor I ever saw," she said.

"I never saw anything like it," Ron said quietly.

"How do you feel?" Phil asked me and I knew, from the way he said it, it was a loaded question.

"How should I feel?" I asked, suspiciously.

Phil forced down his grin. “A little . . . hot?” he asked.

Suddenly, I realized that I *was* hot. I ran my hand over my forehead and rubbed away sweat. I felt as if I’d been sitting in the sun too long.

“What did you do—set fire to me?” I asked.

Phil laughed out loud. “We tried,” he said, “but you wouldn’t catch.”

Then he calmly told me that, while I was stretched out like a board between two kitchen chairs, he’d sat on my stomach and run a cigarette-lighter flame back and forth along my exposed legs.

I just sat there gaping at him.

“Let’s have that again,” I said.

“That’s right,” he said, laughing, delighted at his success. I looked over at Anne again.

“This happened?” I asked, weakly. She got up, smiling, and came over to me. Sitting down she put her arm around me.

“You sure are a dandy subject, love,” she said. Her voice shook a little when she said it.

Ten minutes later we were all sitting around the kitchen table, discussing my hypnotism. I must say it was the first time I’d ever heard an animated discussion in Elsie’s house.

“I didn’t,” I said, laughing.

“You sure did.” Anne made an amused sound. “There you were, twelve years old again, telling us about somebody named Joey Ariola—who must have been a beast from the way you talked about him.”

“Ariola.” I shook my head wonderingly. “I’ll be damned. I’d forgotten all about him.”

“You just thought you’d forgotten,” Phil said.

“Oh . . . I don’t believe anybody can remember that far back,” Elsie said. “He was just making it up or something.”

“He could go back a lot farther than that,” Phil told her. “There are authenticated cases where subjects go back to prenatal days.”

“To what?”

“To before they were born.”

“Oh . . .” Elsie turned her head halfway to the side again. Now that the vision of me stretched calcified between two of her kitchen chairs was beginning to fade, she was regaining dissent.

“That’s right,” Phil said. “And there’s Bridey Murphy.”

“Who?” asked Elsie.

“A woman who, under hypnosis, claims she was an Irish girl in her previous life.”

“Oh . . . that’s silly,” Elsie said. Everybody was quiet for a moment and Elsie looked up at the clock. She shrugged at Phil.

“It’s not time yet,” Phil said.

“Time for what?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” Phil told me.

Elsie got up and went over to the stove. “Who wants more coffee?” she asked. I looked at Phil a moment longer, then let it go.

“What else did I say when I was—I mean when I thought I was twelve again?” I asked Anne.

She smiled and shook her head. “Oh . . . all sorts of things,” she said. “About your father and—your mother. About a bike you wanted that had a foxtail on the handlebars.”

“Oh, my God, yes,” I said, delighted at the sudden recollection. “I remember that. Lord, how I wanted that bike.”

“I wanted something else when I was twelve,” said Frank.

I noticed how Elizabeth looked down at her coffee, her pale red lips pressed together. Everything about Elizabeth was pale; the shade of her lipstick, the blond

of her hair, the color of her skin. She seemed, in a way, to be partially vanished.

“I wasn’t after any bike at twelve,” Frank said.

“Man, we know what you were after,” I said, trying to make it sound like the joke that Frank had not intended it to be. “What else did I talk about?” I asked Anne before Frank could say any more.

I noticed Ron looking up at the clock now, then glancing over at Phil. Phil pressed down a grin—as did Frank. Elsie came back to the table and put down another plate of little glazed cakes.

“Well, I don’t think it’s going to happen,” she said. “It’s already eleven.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“Let’s see,” Anne said as if I hadn’t spoken, “you talked about your sister and—about your room. About your dog.”

For a second I remembered Corky and the way he had of putting his old shaggy head on my knees and staring at me.

“What’s the joke?” I asked, because there was one obviously. “Why are you all looking like cats who swallowed the mice?”

At which point I took off my left shoe and put it into the refrigerator.

I turned to face their explosion of laughter. For a moment I actually didn’t know what they were laughing about. Then, suddenly, I realized what I’d just done. I opened the refrigerator and peered in at my dark shoe placed neatly beside a covered bowl of peas.

“What’d you do that for?” Phil asked, innocently.

“I don’t know,” I said. “I—just wanted to, I guess. Why shouldn’t—?” I stopped abruptly and looked at Phil accusingly. “You crumb, you,” I said, “you gave me a post-hypnotic command.”

Phil grinned, returned to glory again.

“He told you,” Elsie declared. “You knew just what you were doing.”

“No, I didn’t,” I said.

“You did so,” said Elsie, pettishly.

“Say,” said Frank, “what if Tom was a girl and you gave her the post-hypnotic command to—oh, well, never mind, my wife doesn’t like that kind of talk. Do you, Lizzie old girl?”

“He’s always making fun of me,” she answered with attempted lightness. Her smile was pale too.

“I hope you didn’t give me any other post-hypnotic suggestions, you idiot,” I said.

Phil shook his head with a smile.

“Nope,” he said, “that’s all, brother man. It’s over.”

Famous last words.